



Elizabeth Burmaster  
State Superintendent

# DPI VISTA Monthly

## May 2009



**"When people can see a vision and simultaneously recognize what can be done step by step in a concrete way to achieve it, they will begin to feel encouragement and enthusiasm instead of fright."**

—Erich Fromm, *To Have or To Be?*

**Jane Grinde**  
Project Director  
**Betsy Prueter**  
Project Coordinator  
**Ruth Anne Landsverk**  
Family Education Coordinator  
**Casey Gauthier**  
VISTA Leader

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## If the World were a Village: Helping us Gain some Perspective

*By Betsy Prueter*

Some of you may have seen before this but I always find it useful to gain perspective when we're overwhelmed or knee deep in partnership building! Imagine if the entire population of the world were reduced to a village of 100 people. With all existing ratios kept the same, the demographics would look something like this:

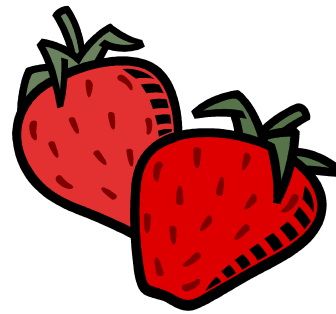
60 Asians  
**12 Europeans**  
5 US Americans and Canadians  
**8 Latin Americans**  
14 Africans  
**49 would be female**  
51 would be male  
**82 would be non-white**  
18 would be white  
**33 would be Christian**

67 would be non-Christian  
**5 would control 32% of the world's wealth**  
80 would live in substandard housing  
**24 would not have any electricity**  
67 would be unable to read  
**1 would have a college education**  
50 would be malnourished  
**1 would be dying of starvation**  
33 would be without access to safe water  
**7 people would have access to the Internet**



Did anything surprise you about this list? What jumped out at you? Can you believe that only 5 people would control almost 1/3 of the world's wealth? And what's more, every one of them would be from the United States. Although 76 people would have electricity, most of them would only use it at night for light. This exercise might be worth sharing with your Action Teams, your community partners, students, and staff at your

site. It's a good way to start a conversation about social justice, race, or poverty. And how powerful might be as an exercise in privilege?



## Recipe of the Month

### Spinach and Strawberry Salad

*This month, Stephanie shares with us a unique recipe that the Parents Plus crew has already enjoyed at a potluck in April. She says, "This is one of my favorite warm weather salads."*

#### INGREDIENTS:

- \* 2 bunches spinach, rinsed and torn into bite-size pieces
- \* 4 cups sliced strawberries
- \* 1/2 cup oil
- \* 1/4 cup vinegar (i.e. white wine or cider vinegar)
- \* 1/2 cup white sugar (I like to use light honey)
- \* 1/4 teaspoon paprika
- \* 2 tablespoons sesame seeds
- \* 1 tablespoon poppy seeds
- \* Finely chopped red onion (optional)
- \* Slivered almonds
- \* Mandarin oranges (optional)

#### DIRECTIONS

1. In a large bowl, toss together the spinach, strawberries and almonds.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together the oil, vinegar, sugar, paprika, sesame

seeds, poppy seeds and optional chopped red onions. Add salt and pepper to taste.

3. Pour over the spinach and strawberries, and toss to coat.

### Save the Dates!



**May 14<sup>th</sup> – Life After  
VISTA webinar,  
10-11 AM**

**May 15<sup>th</sup> –  
Promising Practice  
write-up due**

**May 28<sup>th</sup> – VISTA  
Check-In  
teleconference,  
1-2 PM**

# Why Partnership Action Teams Need Teachers!

By Ruth Anne Landsverk

Are you trying to convince teachers that they need to be part of next year's Action Team? Whether you're looking for new teacher members or asking veteran teacher members to continue, here are some good, research-backed reasons why they should be partnership leaders in your school.

Studies show that:

**Reason #1 Parents want teachers to tell them how to help their child at each grade level.**

Parents think they *should* help if teachers send home learning activities to do with their



child. Parents are more likely to think that they *can* help when teachers show or tell them exactly what to do.

*Conclusion: Action Teams need teachers to help organize home-learning activities so parents know how to help their children learn.(1)*

**Reason #2 When parents are guided by teachers, they spend more time helping their child at home.**

Most parents help their children learn at home with or without the teacher's instruction, but say they would help more if the teacher showed them what to do. Over 85% of parents in

one study said they spent 15 minutes or more helping their children on school activities when the teacher asked them to. Most parents reported that they could help their child an average 44 minutes more if the teacher showed them what to do.

*Conclusion: The Action Team process lets teachers and parents work together to figure out how to guide and encourage home learning.(1)*

**Reason #3: Parents rank teachers and the school higher when teachers actively work to involve parents.**

Parents who believe their child's school is actively working to involve them are more likely to highly rate their school and their child's teachers. Furthermore, parents are more likely to be involved, themselves. Parents increased their understanding of school most when teachers frequently involved parents in children's learning and when the teacher frequently communicated with families.

*Conclusion: Teachers benefit when they actively work with parents on a Partnership Action Team to engage families in learning goals.(1)*

**Reason #4 Teachers are more likely to believe that all parents – regardless of socioeconomic circumstance – can help their child learn when the school has a parent involvement program.**

By allowing them to work closely with parents, Action Teams help teachers talk with and know families more,

increase teachers' awareness of the families' strengths and talents, and make teachers more aware of their own abilities to share information on child learning and development. In addition,

*Conclusion: Action Teams allow teachers to develop their own capacities to understand, communicate with, and use the talents of families to increase children's learning. As a result, teachers come up with new ways to reach families, including those who don't come to the school building. (2)*

**Reason #5 Teachers are better able to help children achieve school goals for learning and behavior.**

Research shows that not only do students in schools with effective Action Teams and other practices of family involvement show gains in achievement test scores, but they also have better attendance, fewer discipline referrals, are more likely to go on to the next grade or graduate, and have a better attitude toward school. (2)

*Conclusion: What more needs to be said? Teachers **need** to be on Action Teams!*

Sources: (1) School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Preparing Educators and Improving Schools. 2001. Joyce L. Epstein.

(2) School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action, Third Edition. 2009. Joyce Epstein and Associates.

## VISTA Interviews

### **Matt answers Nicole's questions**



*Matt is serving with the Appleton area school district.*

**Nicole:** What motivated you to become a VISTA?

**Matt:** My last roommate in Milwaukee told me all about AmeriCorps (he was researching it), and that he was going to apply. It sounded like a great experience, so that's when I started pursuing VISTA positions.

**Nicole:** Where are you from, and where else have you lived?

**Matt:** I was born in Eau Claire, WI, and then moved to Kaukauna when I was about two. Shortly thereafter, my parents and I moved to Appleton. I then moved to Milwaukee for college, and lived there for about five years. Now I'm back in Appleton for VISTA.

**Nicole:** What or who has inspired you? And how has it impacted your life? (whether it be a book, song, quote, person, moment...)

**Matt:** I think some of the great friends I've had over the years have inspired me more than anything else.

**Nicole:** If you were stranded on a deserted island, what five people (living or dead) would you want with you to hang out with?

**Matt:** Henry David Thoreau, Mark Twain, Salma Hayek, Bjork, and Dave Chappelle.



**Nicole:** Where are some places you hope to visit in your lifetime?

**Matt:** Mexico/ South America, Cuba, Czech Republic, Japan, Egypt, Spain, The Netherlands, Palestine, etc.

**Nicole:** If you could change the world with just a thought, what would you think about?

**Matt:** Empathy.

**Nicole:** What would you do with a million dollars?

**Matt:** First I'd pay off my loans, then I'd travel for a few months. Then I'd buy a small house and a Smart Fortwo car and settle down for maybe a year (start getting really healthy, etc.) Soon, I'd buy some land for organic/ sustainable agriculture, then set up a bunch of cooperatives, news outlets, homeless shelters, etc. Then I'd publish and distribute a magazine about survival, self defense, solidarity, civil disobedience, and autonomy. Basically, I'd want most of the money to go toward uniting people and promoting peace,

freedom, equality, rationality, and sustainability. I'd also get lots more tattoos and make some films/documentaries.

**Nicole:** What makes you happy?

**Matt:** Friends, family, good health, nice weather, positive change, traveling, learning, laughing, and creative output (writing, film-making, photographing, etc.)

**Nicole:** (And two questions I love from Bernard Pivot) What is your favorite word? And why?

**Matt:** My favorite word is "iconoclast". Its intensity and virtue are consistent with its definition.

**Nicole:** What sound do you love to hear?

**Matt:** I love the sound of thunder. Also, the sound of waves crashing into the shore.

## Nicole answers Matt's questions



*Nicole is serving at Grove Elementary in Wisconsin Rapids.*

**Matt:** What did you do before becoming a VISTA?

**Nicole:** For the year prior to VISTA, I worked as a noon-aide at my site, my son's elementary school. Backing up before that, I was a stay at home



mother for the first 5 years of my son's life.

**Matt:** Where are you from, and where else have you lived?

**Nicole:** I was born in Elgin, Illinois but moved to Southern California in the 1st grade and didn't technically move out of California until I was 30. Central Wisconsin has been my home for almost 2 years now.

**Matt:** What kinds of music do you listen to?

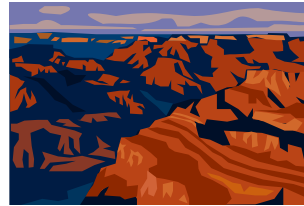
**Nicole:** I am not really sure how to "genre" music but here are some good representatives of some categories: Sabicas, Ravi Shankar, Otis Redding, Hank Williams Sr., Bob Marley, Bob Dylan, Operation Ivy, Pixies, Beach Boys, Descendents, Tom Waits, Tracy Chapman, Bjork, Flogging Molly, Mazzy Star, John Cougar Mellencamp, Beastie Boys, The Velvet Underground with Nico, Stiff Little Fingers, Fugazi, Dwight Yoakam, Nirvana, Led Zeppelin, Beck, and Credence Clearwater Revival, The Beatles, Face to Face, Neil Diamond, The Cars, Joan Jett...I guess my list could go on and on- I tried to eliminate any bands/artists that I thought might fit into the same "genre" as ones I listed.

**Matt:** What has been your favorite traveling experience?

**Nicole:** After graduating high school, I took off to backpack all over Europe, not planning but rather going wherever the day would take me. One of the few things I knew I wanted to do was snowboard the Matterhorn in Switzerland. I did and I went blind for two days after, due to burned retinas (high elevation

and sun reflecting off snow can be dangerous, I learned) I didn't know if my sight would ever return, because they told me my retinas could scar in the healing process. But the whole time I was blind, I thought it had been worth it- I would have been left with some glorious sights to fill the rest of my life!

**Matt:** What are some of your goals and dreams for the future?



**Nicole:** I would like to make it a goal to get in better shape, because I feel

my age sometimes when I do the activities I enjoy and I want to be one of those mega-grandmas entering cartwheel contests and jumping the Grand Canyon. I also dream of traveling extensively when my son hits that tender junior high age range, to teaching him more about the world and show him how much we all have to offer one another first hand.

**Matt:** What are some of your hobbies?

**Nicole:** Any opportunity to be creative, or a part of nature, or involved in my son's life. (My husband joked with me that I wouldn't be able to narrow it down, because learning and being inspired is my main hobby, and that can come from anything!)

**Matt:** What are your favorite news sources?

**Nicole:** Sometime I watch a bit of tube news or read our local news, but I am not a huge news buff. Most of my info comes from discussions

with my husband, or people I come in contact with.

**Matt:** What movie(s) have you seen lately? Any recommendations?

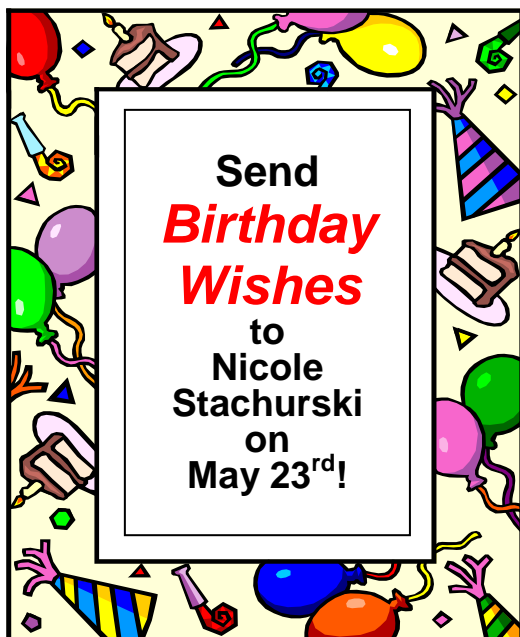
**Nicole:** I try to watch a lot of flicks, because I have extended family members who like to discuss them- but I find it difficult to endorse some, especially newer ones. I tend to like different films for specific different reasons. If I had to endorse any- I would go with documentaries because I love biased/subjective view points to get your mind reeling.

**Matt:** What is your favorite form of transportation?

**Nicole:** For shorter distances, I love to ride my bicycle and for longer I love being on a train (cross-country Amtrak, metro, subways, Eurostar, ICE train, monorails, etc.) and hopping a bus (in a complete loop- getting on and off at the same stop) to check out a city.

**Matt:** What are some of your favorite books?

**Nicole:** For the last 7 or so years, I have been studying The Bible.



## New Website Review

*By Casey Gauthier*

Recently, I did some browsing on <http://www.families-schools.org>, which has so many great resources perfectly suited for the type of work VISTAs are doing.

On the site, resources are divided into sections for parents and sections for schools.

One can choose to search by keyword or by group or topic.

For fun, I clicked on "Resources for Parents," then "Search by Keyword," and I typed in "literacy." Fifteen results appeared nearly instantly, some in Spanish. The results lead you to pages or websites full of even more information that might be related.

Next, I clicked on "Resources for Schools," then "Search by Age Group/Topic." I then chose "Elementary School" and "Parent Education." This resulted in 65 resources, including *Beyond the Bake Sale* and National Network of Partnership Schools!

Just want to see what the site has to offer in general? On the home page, there is a link on the top to "Resources Spotlights." You can find a few resources that they consider to exceptional.

So log on, check it out, and you're bound to find resources that will be helpful at your site!

## **Supervisor Segment: Help bring out the best in your members**

Coaches aren't just for athletes! Your members are likely to encounter many situations where personal coaching will make a big difference in outcomes—whether it's improving communication, resolving conflict, making better decisions, managing transitions, or negotiating with agencies, supervisors, and clients.

Unique to any other service, volunteerism, or work experience, AmeriCorps programs are intentional about the personal growth and goal setting of its members. In the VISTA Supervisor Orientation, supervisors explore how coaching can benefit member-supervisor relationships. They look at the following benefits of coaching:

- When you coach members, you increase interaction with them. You listen, inquire, communicate and search for solutions.
- Coaching allows people to share their perceptions of what happened in an event or situation, and discuss the perceptions.
- A coach asks open-ended questions and guides someone to think something through, instead of giving answers.

- Coaching is performance focused and provides feedback on both strengths and weaknesses.
- Coaching requires people to slow down, listen more deeply and become less reactive. A coach could be wrong. A coach does not have all the answers.

### **Resources:**

#### **Personal Growth Plan**

[http://encorps.nationalserviceresources.org/resources/member\\_training/personal\\_goal\\_setting.php](http://encorps.nationalserviceresources.org/resources/member_training/personal_goal_setting.php)

#### **The Johari Window**

[http://encorps.nationalserviceresources.org/resources/personal\\_development/the\\_johari\\_window.php](http://encorps.nationalserviceresources.org/resources/personal_development/the_johari_window.php)

#### **Reactive Through Exercise**

[http://encorps.nationalserviceresources.org/resources/personal\\_development/reactive\\_thought\\_exercise.php](http://encorps.nationalserviceresources.org/resources/personal_development/reactive_thought_exercise.php)

[http://encorps.nationalserviceresources.org/coaching\\_1.php](http://encorps.nationalserviceresources.org/coaching_1.php)



## Grant Opportunities



### **Target: Early Childhood Reading Grants**

Target Early Childhood Reading Grants support programs like weekend book clubs and after-school reading programs that foster a love of reading and encourage children, from birth through age nine, to read together with their families.

Deadline: May 31, 2009.

<http://sites.target.com/site/en/company/page.jsp?contentId=WCMP04-031821>

### **Youth Award for Outstanding Activism in Environmental and Social Justice**

The Earth Island Institute Brower Youth Award recognizes young people for their outstanding activism and achievements in the fields of environmental and social justice advocacy.

Deadline: May 15, 2009.

<http://www.broweryouthawards.org/article.php?list=type&type=12>

### **What Kids Can Do: Speech Contest 2009**

As Graduation Day approaches, What Kids Can Do invites students to raise their voice and let others know what matters most to them in this moment and in the years ahead.

This year's theme: "Crisis and Hope in These Trying Times."

Deadline: May 18, 2009.

[http://www.wkcd.org/featurestories/2009/03\\_WKCD%20speech%20contest/index.html](http://www.wkcd.org/featurestories/2009/03_WKCD%20speech%20contest/index.html)

### **Saucony: Run For Good**

The Saucony Run For Good Program encourages active and healthy lifestyles in children, and offers grants to communities and non-profit organizations that initiate and support running and fitness programs for kids.

Deadline: June 13, 2009.

<http://www.sauconyrunforgood.com/>

### **The Graffiti Hurts National Grant Program**

This program aims to help communities kick-start or add to local graffiti prevention programs. Grant funds may be used for one-time projects with the potential to reduce graffiti in the community. Eligibility: 501(c)3 organizations, including neighborhood groups, crime prevention associations, civic clubs or organizations, and other nonprofit groups; youth groups/schools; police departments or other law enforcement agencies; city, county, state and federal government agencies, or subdivisions within these agencies.

Deadline: June 5, 2009.

[http://www.graffitihurts.org/grant\\_program/index.cfm](http://www.graffitihurts.org/grant_program/index.cfm)